

Requiescat en Pace – Marianne Anderson
Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33
Romans 8:31-39
John 10:22-30

Marianne was part Mary Poppins, part Gen. George S. Patton. She struck me as someone who could, at any moment, sprinkle a little maternal pixie dust on any situation to make it practically perfect in every way but when you turned your back, she would champ her cigar and plan her next military operation. She was the most marvelous and unexpected blend of feminine sweetness and muscular “can-do” aggression. I loved her. I’ve never met anyone like her. Strong; Marianne was the personification of scrappy, humble, and devout strength. No silver spoon was put in her mouth as a child. Born in 1936 to Swiss parents, raised in a town of 500 and familiar with hard work, Marianne possessed a “blue collar” approach to life. Her mother and father ran a truck stop and café – Phillips 66 in Zimmerman, MN. Marianne was comfortable in either side of the operation. Perhaps it was her love for her father, but she learned what he taught her. One of the things he taught her was how to fix things, how to use her hands and get busy. Marianne was equal parts lace and coveralls.

Adversity; we all face it. This world is broken. That should be self-evident to everyone. Death has no manners, no sense of proportion or restraint. How one faces adversity says a lot about what you truly believe. It’s easy to speak of our Christian decorum in good times. It’s easy to model what you say you believe when all is sunny and warm but when the cold and lonely wind of adversity blows in your face – that’s when the world sees whether your actions and your confession of faith comport. None of us are perfect. We all fail. But it is also true that some embody the faith in ways that leave a deep impression on us. People were aware of others long before Facebook arrived on the scene. We watch others; not always in a gossipy way. We watch because we are interested. We learn from others who go through difficulty. We are inspired not so much by Christian behavior on the part of those who have the world by the tail but by those who suffer.

Marianne’s adversities were real; at times, they were public. People watched her. Just think of *that* for a moment. Enduring great difficulty and also knowing that others were watching. How did she cope? She relied on Christ. “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 124:8). That wasn’t an empty liturgical verse for Marianne – one that rolls off the tongue easily but means nothing to the heart. Her trust was not in a theoretical Savior but in the Christ of the cross. He is the ground upon which adversity finds solid footing. He is the comfort of the grieving, peace for the anxious and hope for the distressed. Marianne was more than a conqueror. Marianne was more than a conqueror for Christ loved her and she knew it. Nothing would separate Him from her and she knew it. When we truly grasp the wonder of that love then embodying the faith in adversity is like breathing – we do it without noticing. It’s the sick who go to a physician. Jesus said as much (Mark 2:17). Marianne embodied the saint who knew that she was sick and continually visited the Good Physician. She sat at His feet. She absorbed His teaching. She gladly received His forgiveness, His holiness, His peace, and His strength.

In love, the Son of God ventured into our broken world to bring us the healing of His blood. Divine life was unleashed in Jesus. The Son of Mary is Immanuel – God with us. Not in some

safe space, not keeping socially distant or sheltering beneath antiseptic, personally protective equipment – but vulnerable to lash and spear, vulnerable to a false trial, a false verdict, a false sentence. Almighty God offered up His Son as a sacrifice. The Lord Christ laid down His life in obedience to His Father because sin must be atoned for, because sin demanded a payment, because none but God Himself could pay. Him for you; Christianity is nothing more, nothing less. When you were dead in trespasses and sins, God made you alive in Christ, it is by grace you have been saved. Him for you; when you were dead in your trespasses and sins, God sent His beloved Son to reclaim you. Him for you; Divine love in action puts Jesus on the cross. Him for you; your sin is put on the Lord of creation and He bears it. Him for you; vulnerable to death, the Author of life is crucified. Him for you; laid in a tomb, His redeeming work complete, Jesus rests from His labor. He rises! Holiness, life, heaven – He rises! God strides out of the tomb, death is thoroughly defeated and Easter is now perpetually in our air. Resurrection grips the heart and God’s life invades our own. Christ makes us strong. If God is for us, who can be against us? If God is for us, what could be against us?

Marianne carried this life of Christ’s into everything that she did. Marianne had many vocations, many hats that she wore – let’s focus on just three. She was built to be a mother (a grandmother). Devotion to her daughters, to give them every advantage of love, of maternal wisdom, of support and encouragement and direction – Marianne treasured her vocation as mother. Marianne was built to be a mother – nurturing, engendering faith, modeling feminine fidelity for her girls. It was Christ who built her to be a mother. He nurtured her. He gave her every advantage of His love, His wisdom, His unending support and direction. Faith reflects the Giver of every perfect gift. In all that we do, as Christians, in all that we do, faith reflects Christ. As a mother, this woman blessed her daughters because she knew what she had been given. Freely Marianne received; freely she gave. Was it not her joy to give – to her grandchildren, her great-grandchildren? Was her love not robust and active and full of grace? Did you not see the Christ in that love?

Marianne was a nurse; an oncology nurse. That is not easy. To nurse the sick is one thing. To daily nurse the dying is another. No, not everyone dies of cancer but the oncology floor is not the most hopeful floor in the hospital. That is where Marianne served. Her faith buoyed her on that floor. Make no mistake, her faith buoyed her patients. Light is in a Christian – the light of Christ. Jesus said: “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). Marianne didn’t hide her light. She let it shine. On that floor, that dark, cancer floor, the Light of Christ which God made to shine in Marianne was present for her patients. Her good works, her busy hands, her humility and courage and faithfulness and hope – light was on *that* floor through our sister. God’s name was hallowed at St. B’s and the sick were nursed in more ways than one. Marianne was built to be a nurse. God built her for that work. She knew that Christ nursed her – with His love, with His forgiveness, with His health, with His blood and His Easter and His Triumph – Christ nursed her. He worked through her to bless those He loved on that floor.

Marianne loved children, loved children’s ministry and served both on our school board and in the Sunday School classroom. Marianne was built to be a Sunday School teacher. Her mind was alive with how to present the lesson, how to teach Christ, how to bless God’s little ones with His Word. Christ Himself built her to be a Sunday School teacher. She loved because Christ first loved her. Grace flourished in that room because grace flourished in her heart. Him for her.

That is how she saw her life and that's how she lived her life – when adversity came near and when it was further away. Him for her; it was what she heard when she heard the Gospel. Him for her; it was what she received when she came to this altar. It was what she received when she communed at this altar. Him for her; It led her to teach children, nurse the sick and be a mother and grandmother to her brood.

She knew His voice. Marianne knew Christ's voice and she followed Him. He called to her. The Good Shepherd called His sheep. Follow me, Marianne. Come to me, Marianne. She waited quietly, her body failing. “‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him’” (Lamentations 3:24). She waited quietly, knowing who she waited for, who held her trust. And He came for her. Come unto me and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28). Come, beloved of my Father and receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 23:34). Come, Marianne, for I have prepared a place for you (John 14:3). The crucified and risen King came for His daughter and brought her out of this broken world and into His eternal Kingdom. Light and hope and joy and music and health and strength and harmony and peace are Marianne's for she is with Christ in heaven. All that she received in this life, all that for which she was built was preparatory – the fullness of life is now realized for her. We walk the same path. Whatever Christ wills to build in us, we are eager to become. We are recipients of the same love, the same forgiveness, the same holiness as our sister. We will follow her for Christ will shepherd us in the Way. Believers are built for heaven. Like her, like Marianne, it is our joy to walk in the way that leads to eternal life.